

COLCHESTER RADIO AMATEURS

COLCHESTER RADIO AMATEURS was set up in 1963 by Marconi Apprentices in training at the North East Essex Technical College, now the Colchester Institute. The College commenced training for the City and Guilds Radio Amateurs Examination in 1956 and many candidates joined the group bringing the current membership to over 100. CRA is affiliated to the Radio Society of Great Britain and is a supporter of the Society's activities including contesting and training for the Foundation and Intermediate Licences. The Club meets regularly every two weeks and at our last meeting there was a wide ranging discussion on the OFCOM Consultation Paper, The Spectrum Framework Review, when about 40 members were present. All members had been briefed in an earlier newsletter which included a summary of the Consultation Paper. Arising from this discussion it was agreed that the Club should respond and comment on the issues raised in the Paper relating to Amateur Radio.

Members considered the options of "Command and Control", "Market Forces" and "Licence Exempt" and while many wished to continue with the present arrangements under "Command and Control" it seemed more likely that "Licence Exempt" would be the outcome of the proposed development of OFCOM as a light touch Regulator.

Although "Licence Exempt" suggests a category with few rules, open access and no requirement to show a minimum level of competence, to maintain the Amateur Radio Service as a respected and essential contributor to the Community the meeting was emphatic that it was necessary to have a clear framework for the activity and a responsible organisation to lead it. Members present agreed unanimously that the continuation of a self-trained, highly skilled force of operators and technicians must be maintained to ensure it's availability to the Community and the Nation whenever it may be required.

Radio Amateurs have made and continue to make significant contributions to the general fund of knowledge in areas such as radio propagation, electronics, space communication, etc and the profile and status of a future organisation must be structured to maintain this.

A number of more detailed issues were raised, including the issue of unique callsigns, procedures for dealing with interference and formalising the legal position of the lead organisation and it's funding. These points will be considered again in the light of the outcome of The Spectrum Review.